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Lt. James Grubbs Hero In Fight With Jap Snipers To Save PT Boat



After destroying eight Jap barges in a daring daylight sweep along an enemy-held beach near Liloan on Cebu Island, Philippines, two Seventh Fleet PT boats slugged it out with enemy snipers while one of the PTs rescued the other from a reef.

Wallace Woods Back at Base After Iwo Tour

Coast Guardsman Wallace G. Woods, MoM, 3/c, of 1629 Elm st., Torrance, has just returned to an advanced Pacific base after having participated in the invasion of Okinawa.

A veteran of the Iwo campaign, Woods said, "We were lucky at Iwo. Although we lay close to shore for more than a week before being unloaded, we had very little trouble with the Japs. A few of their mortar shells exploded nearby, but didn't do any damage to us. Each night the Japs would send over some planes on nuisance raids, but only one of them came within range of our guns."

"Okinawa was the exact duplicate of Iwo except that the actual landings were unopposed. About the only resistance we encountered were the nightly raids. Some Jap planes managed to come over each day but none of them came near our ship, so we just watched the other ships knock them into the water. Our battleships and cruisers battered the island with daily bombardments, and shells seemed to be whining overhead every minute. Accompanying the screech of the shells was the roar of American planes heading inland to dive bomb and strafe enemy installations. Throughout it all other American aircraft provided a protective cover for the invasion fleet."

"It was a wonderful demonstration of American power!"

Lieut. (j.g.) James Lowell Grubbs, 27, USNR, of Torrance, executive officer of PT-349, the rescuing boat, was at the wheel of his craft during the action.

The attack was made on a large Jap barge-building center and supply depot shortly after 8 a.m. on March 21. Army fighter planes cooperated by strafing the center. Their job done, the planes departed, leaving the torpedo boats on their own.

Lieutenant Grubbs relates that eight camouflaged barges were discovered tied up along the beach. In a matter of minutes, hot steel and incendiaries destroyed all eight barges.

In retiring from the action, PT-350 grounded on a hidden reef. She stuck fast, her powerful engines impotent. Jap snipers opened up from the shore.

Lieutenant Grubbs' boat made two unsuccessful attempts to pull the stranded vessel off the seaward side of the reef. Meanwhile, sniper fire increased in intensity. One of Lieutenant Grubbs' crewmen was hit.

Back inside the lagoon went PT-349, while the leadman took soundings. The leadline, entangled in an obstruction, had to be cut. Quickly improvising a new one, with a shell casing for the weight, the rescuers reached the marooned boat.

Two attempts to whip the grounded craft off from the side were failures. Now the Jap sniper fire became more accurate. Two more PT men were hit. One gunner, shot in the foot, sat down in the cockpit, removed his shoe, pulled out the bullet, and limped back to his gun.

At length, tied bow to stern, with her sister ship, PT-349 backed toward the beach and succeeded in freeing the other. With their ammunition running low, it was none too soon. Both boats got under way and once more ran the gauntlet of beach fire to the open sea and to safety.

Lieutenant Grubbs is a veteran of 29 such combat patrols during nine months spent in the southwest Pacific. A graduate of Torrance High school, and holder of an A.B. degree from Stanford, 1939, he was studying law at Stanford University at the time of his commissioning, Dec. 26, 1941. Called to active duty in June, 1943, he was indoctrinated at the University of Arizona and at Fort Schuyler, N. Y., then took instruction at Motor Torpedo Boat Squadrons Training Center, Melville, R. I.

His wife, and his mother, Mrs. E. H. Grubbs, live at 1515 El Prado st.

Walter G. Crowner, of 22521 S. Vermont ave., Torrance, has just been demobilized from the 15th Infantry on the point system. He served in the following campaigns: Algerian, French Morocco, Tunisian, Sicilian, Naples, Foggia, Southern France, Rome, Arno and Rhineland.

Servicemen's stationery? Call Torrance 444 or 443.

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